

WHEATHAMPSTEAD PARISH COUNCIL

Plans Committee

13th October 2008

Present: Cllrs. G. Clark (Chairman), I. Begg, A. Brewster, N.D.Clements, D. Hills,
L. Hobden, K. Stammers, J. Turner, S. Walford

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs. Page(previous engagement) & Waterfield (work)

In Attendance: The Clerk, Mrs. B. Green

Approximately 40 residents from Butterfield Road attended the meeting as planning application no. 5/08/2204, Wheathampstead Education Centre, Butterfield Road, was of particular interest and concern to that area of the village.

Cllr. Clark opened the meeting by informing everyone present that she and Cllr. Brewster had met with two representatives from Persimmon Homes, one of whom was the Land Director, on 10th October.

Re: The wildlife on the site – Persimmon has a specialist on slow-worms and bats.

Ridge Height – There will be a change of condition – the height will be no more than 9 metres from the slab and some would be 7 ½ metres. No building would be more than two storey and there would be no windows in the roof.

The grass area would be made a more formal area.

Residents were invited to comment on these plans, and the following concerns were raised.

- i) Deviation from the outline planning consent. The land is Green Belt on top of a hill. Originally the plan had shown 6 – 4-bed houses now there are 30 4-bed residences. (Original scheme was 6 x 4-bed, 29 x 3-bed & 32 x 2-bed, compared with 30 x 4-bed, 25 x 3-bed & 13 x 2-beds).
- ii) Car parking spaces have been reduced by 32. There are no measures to deal with this.
- iii) Bus Service is totally inadequate. People will need cars.
- iv) Policy 70 – Plot no. 67 is within 22 metres of 23 Butterfield Road, understand the minimum is 27 metres.
- v) Roadway within the development is totally inadequate.
- vi) Request that the Parish Council thoroughly checks the application before making its comments.
- vii) Are there pavements within the site?
*Note – This is a building experiment copied from Holland. Grassed areas going directly on to the road with no kerbs makes for safer driving and therefore is safer for pedestrians!
- viii) Parking – With limited parking where will all the extra cars park? Why reduce the current parking bay? *Note – This was reduced in accordance with HCC Highways guidance.
Forcing vehicles to be parked in Butterfield Road will cause conflict.

- ix) What is the difference between affordable housing and social housing? *
- x) The fencing around the arbour is incomplete.
- xi) Site Management Committee – How is this going to be controlled?
- xii) Ecological Considerations – The planning authority did not give due regard to ecological issues at the former school site. There appears to be an apparent lack of attention by the authority to the presence of protected species.
Assurance is needed that before land clearance or demolition the planning authority understands that protected species are a material consideration in the planning process and that any adverse impacts are adequately mitigated against or compensated for through planning conditions, obligations or section 106 Agreements. Slow-worms are protected in law which may threaten their well being (WCA 1881 as amended Section 1, Schedule 5). It is the responsibility of the planning authorities to advise developers that they must comply with statutory species protection provisions.

5/08/2203 Wheathampstead Education Centre, Butterfield Road – Change of Condition 5
A condition must be placed on the height. The Parish Council could not support the change of condition 5 regarding the height clause. The Parish Council and residents do not want three storey houses on the site.
Cllr. Turner proposed - ‘We could not accept this. Recommend Refusal’, seconded Cllr. Hobden. Agreed

RECOMMEND REFUSAL

The Planning Committee then discussed plan no. 5/08/2204 Wheathampstead Education Centre, Butterfield Road – Demolition of existing and redevelopment of site for residential use at density of 30 dwellings per hectare with appearance, landscaping, layout and scale (reserve matters)

Points raised by the residents would be forwarded to the District Council planning department within the Parish Council’s response. Members were also concerned about there being too many houses on the site, the ecological status on the site, and the height of the buildings.

Cllr. Clements was concerned about the current position of the fence on the playing field site could Persimmons think they have acquired an extra area? This is to be checked with County. He was also concerned about archaeology on the site.

Among other concerns of the members were, preservation of trees, particularly the one planted by H. M. the Queen mother, safety of tools and equipment during the work, need of electricity and water to the changing room, loss of privacy to nearby properties, road safety (20mph for the estate), the development is out of character with the village, and lack of school places. Persimmons attention to be drawn to the car park which forms part of the lease for the playing field. This car park will be closed to the residents and only open by the footballers when they are playing at Butterfield Road.

Having put forward all these concerns members voted Recommend Refusal on a proposal by Cllr. Hobden which was seconded by Cllr Begg. The vote was 8 for RECOMMEND REFUSAL.

* ix) The site will have ‘affordable housing’. Under the planning permission and the Section 106 Agreement the affordable housing is to be provided as 70% rented and 30% shared ownership. Both forms of tenure are considered as affordable under the Government definition. Persimmon will contract with a Housing Association to build the dwellings and the land and the buildings will then be transferred to the Housing Association once completed. Of the proposed 68 dwellings on the site 24 will be affordable (35.29%).

